

SERIES 1999-2000

Circular Letter: C-10

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Theodore S. Sergi
Commissioner of Education

DATE: January 10, 2000

SUBJECT: New Federal Carl D. Perkins – Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998

This memo is to advise you of some of the changes that will effect school districts receiving funds under the reauthorized P.L. 105-800, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 beginning with the July 1, 2000 school year. Some of these changes which include setting standards, student assessment in the vocational areas and reporting protocols will require new state and local capacity and strategies. We are working hard in the department and with the local districts to determine effective cost efficient ways to address these requirements. Listed below is an inventory of what we expect our challenges will be and how we hope to address them.

As a part of the goal of Congress to implement stronger accountability measures, performance standards for both Titles I and II of the Workforce Investment Act and Perkins legislation have a direct connection for the first time. All three areas must meet or exceed the state established performance standards under its authorization in order for the state to receive incentive grants. If any of the areas do not meet the standards no incentive funds can be awarded. If performance standards are not met in subsequent years and technical assistance to programs do not result in improved state performance, states face the possibility of reduction of Perkins funds.

The intent of the new legislation is to raise the performance of all students enrolled in vocational and technical programs and to measure the attainment of these skills through required performance indicators. As a state we must determine levels of performance for the following required core indicators:

- Students attainment of challenging state established academic, and vocational and technical skills proficiencies;
- Student attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, a proficiency credential in conjunction with a secondary school diploma, or a post secondary degree or credential;

- Placement in, retention and completion of, post secondary education or advanced training, placement in military services, or placement or retention in employment; and
- Student participation in and completion of vocational and technical education programs that lead to nontraditional training and employment.

The State must determine the number or percentage of students who attain those standards by using valid and reliable assessment instruments. To measure the academic requirements it is our intent to continue to use the results of the CAPT. ***However, for the first time, states will need to establish a definition for students who are vocational and technical education “concentrators”.*** That definition in Connecticut is:

Students who have taken *not less than two full credits (two year-long courses, or four semester-long courses or a combination thereof)* in a single vocational or technical occupational area that can lead to entry level employment or continuation at the post secondary level, are vocational technical “concentrators”.

This definition was reached after review of the legislation and discussions with local district and state staff. We anticipate that for most students the coursework will not be completed prior to the senior year. Therefore, most testing will be in May/June of the senior year.

During the course of the year representatives from local school district programs have met to establish performance standards for those areas that will have student concentrators. We expect to fund districts that are able to offer at least three vocational and technical education areas, one of which must provide for student concentrators. As we proceed to develop the process for implementation we anticipate there will be costs involved that may impact funding in future years. We will do our best to provide effective, cost efficient assessments that allow us to demonstrate our successes in providing students with the skills they need to succeed. Our next steps will be the following:

- Review already developed and validated national vocational assessment instruments and determine feasibility for use in Connecticut;
- Select the assessments and negotiate with the vendor the costs involved (state and local) in administering the assessments, scoring the assessments, compilation and analysis of the results;
- Develop timelines to introduce the assessments to the local districts and establish protocols for test administration; and
- Develop reporting mechanisms for both local and state use to determine attainment of program standards and fulfill federal reporting requirements.

Local districts with student “concentrators” will have to administer these assessments to these students. In any event, all students who have taken at least one vocational course will have to be reported under the CAPT results. This is currently a requirement for the districts.

The next several months will be spent exploring all the options available to us to implement these new requirements. Staff from the Bureau of Career and Adult Education will be planning a series of regional meetings with local school district personnel to provide greater detail into the process and to hear your questions and concerns. For the present time you may direct additional questions to Roberta Pawloski, Bureau Chief at 860-807-2100 (roberta.pawloski@po.state.ct.us).

We look forward to successfully implementing the next phase in our efforts to provide quality vocational and technical educational opportunities to our youth. Thank you for your support.

TSS:RPp